MARCH 25, 2020

North Korea's Long-term Prison-Labor Facility *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn

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The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea
북한인권위원회

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NORTH KOREA'S LONG-TERM PRISON-LABOR FACILITY (*KYO-HWA-SO*) AT KAECH'ŎN

Location:
Kaech'ŏn (개천), Kaech'ŏn-si, P'yŏngnam

CenterPoint Coordinates:
39.708310° N, 125.923356° E

Date of Report:
March 25, 2020

Date of Imagery:
DigitalGlobe/Maxar Technologies: December 5, 2002, December 31, 2010, and April 1, 2019

Central Intelligence Agency (Declassified): December 15, 1962 (KH-4), April 24, 1966 (KH-7), and April 20, 1972 (KH-4B)[1]

Size of Facility (including labor training camp):
107,190 square meters (128,199 square yards)
643 meters by 330 meters (703 yards by 360 yards)

Background

In February 2014, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea (UN COI) found the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK's) political prison camps to be places where the most egregious crimes against humanity are being committed, including extermination; murder; enslavement; torture; imprisonment; rape and other grave sexual violence; and persecution on political, religious, and gender grounds.[2] Such crimes were "found by the UN COI to rise to the level of *crimes against humanity* in both the *kwan-li-so* and *kyo-hwa-so* [labor re-education] prisons," and "lead to the death of prisoners in many cases."[3] The UN COI called on the DPRK to acknowledge the existence of the political prison camps and provide its citizens with basic human rights.[4]

The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea's (HRNK's) satellite imagery analysis and former prisoner testimony on the situation inside political prison camps (*kwan-li-so*) and re-education through labor camps (*kyo-hwa-so*) continue to yield new information on the DPRK's practice of imprisoning people it deems anti-state, anti-nation, or anti-regime.[5] HRNK found over 20 potential re-education through labor camps inside the DPRK, documented in our October 2017 report, *The Parallel Gulag*.[6] These camps exist and function in addition to six operational political prison camps—Nos. 14, 15, 16, 18, 25, and Choma-bong Restricted Area.[7]

Since the 2014 UN COI report, there have been continued reports of ill treatment and torture of prisoners, including from women who have attempted to flee the country, and prisoner disappearances. Satellite imagery has shown the expansion of the DPRK's detention facilities in some cases as well as increased security measures inside these facilities.

Based on research conducted by HRNK, five trends have defined the human rights situation under the Kim Jong-un regime: 1) an intensive crackdown on attempted defections; 2) an aggressive purge of senior officials, aimed to consolidate the leader's grip on power; 3) a "restructuring" of the political prison camp system, with some facilities closer to the border with China being shut down, while inland facilities have been expanded; 4) the disproportionate oppression of women, who have assumed primary responsibility for the survival of their families and thus, women represent the majority of those arrested for perceived wrongdoing at the "jangmadang" markets or for "illegally" crossing the border; and 5) the sustained, if not increased, economic importance of the political prison camps and other detention facilities.

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Former Prisoner Testimony

In 2019, HRNK interviewed Ms. Kim Il-soon (pseudonym) in Seoul, South Korea, about her detention experience in *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn. Ms. Kim's testimony complements the satellite imagery analysis for this report. It also allows us to tell more of her story in an effort to document and pursue accountability for alleged crimes against humanity in North Korea. The following are excerpts from our interview:

> ***Interviewer:*** *When you were there, were you considered a political prisoner or did they ever tell you what your charge was specifically? Did they think of you as anti-regime?*
>
> ***Interviewee:*** *When I was tried in the Bo-wi-bu, they forced me to admit to an anti-regime political crime. I denied it, and they beat me up for two months because they thought I was lying. They couldn't prove this crime because I was arrested alone. They ended up sending me to the bo-an-so,*[8] *charging me with border trespassing [Article 221 in the 2012 DPRK Criminal Code]. If I had been convicted of an anti-regime crime, I wouldn't have been sent to an ordinary kyo-hwa-so. I would have been sent to a political prison camp.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Were most people there because they tried to cross the border?*
>
> ***Interviewee:*** *80% of the prisoners from Ryanggang Province are sent to the kyo-hwa-so because they were arrested for crossing the border. There were people arrested for trying to trespass in the border area, normal felons, and drug abusers at the facility in Kaechon. All the North Korean provinces have a kyo-hwa-so, but Ryanggang Province was the only province that didn't have one because it was so close to the border and there were many visitors. So Ryanggang Province residents were sent to the kyo-hwa-so in Kaechon. This road is the entrance to the underground facility. Right here is where we grew the vegetables, and this storage container is where we kept the vegetables.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *What kind of vegetables?*
>
> ***Interviewee:*** *Cabbage, radish, and spinach. These vegetables were for the kyo-hwa-so guards and their families. The little kids planted beans.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Where was the field they buried people?*
>
> ***Interviewee:*** *They buried people in the mountains right here. One time, a kid was peeing in the mountains and saw an arm sticking out because they forgot to cover it properly. The kyo-hwa-so farmland in Kaechon is yellow. The lands are very fertilized, and farming is successful here because the buried human bodies serve as natural fertilizers. Some guards said that they should bury the bodies evenly throughout the land so that it will fertilize the entire area.*

ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

This report is part of a comprehensive long-term project undertaken by HRNK to use satellite imagery to shed light on human suffering in the DPRK (more commonly known as North Korea) by monitoring activity at political prison and detention facilities throughout the nation.[9] This study details activity observed during 1962–1972 and 2002–2019 at a prison facility

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identified by former prisoners and researchers as "*Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn" (39.708310° 125.923356°) and endeavors to establish a preliminary report of the facility.[10] In doing so, this report also provides preliminary baseline information on the labor training camp (*ro-dong-dan-ryeon-dae*) attached to the facility.

For this report HRNK analyzed 19 high-resolution pan-sharpened multispectral and pan-chromatic satellite images of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn and its immediate environs focusing on the examination of the following physical features:[11]

- Security perimeters (internal and external), entrance and guard positions
- Main prison
- Headquarters, administration, barracks, housing and support facilities
- Labor training camp (with a former underground political prison camp)
- Activity in the immediate environs of the facility
- Walled compounds
- Coal mine

Based upon analysis of these features, *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn is a small operational prison camp established between 1962 and 1966. It is well maintained by North Korean standards as indicated by activity and general good maintenance in and immediately surrounding the camp.

Satellite imagery coverage of the facility and former prisoner testimony indicate that the prison's primary economic activity is a combination of light manufacturing of shoes, cabinets, other wood products, agricultural production, and mining using forced labor.[12] Population estimates for *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 have consistently been between 2,000 and 6,000.[13] Former prisoner testimony indicates that approximately 80% of the prisoners are individuals from Ryanggang-do (i.e., Ryanggang Province) who had been captured while crossing into China, and the remaining 20% are common criminals.[14]

As with the analytical caution presented in previous HRNK reports (such as *North Korea's Long-term Re-education through Labor Camp (Kyo-hwa-so) at Pokchŏng-ni*), it is important to reiterate that North Korean officials, especially those within the Korean People's Army and the internal security organizations, clearly understand the importance of implementing camouflage, concealment, and deception (CCD) procedures to mask their operations and intentions.[15] It would not be unreasonable to assume that they have done so here.

Location and Subordination

Kyo-hwa-so No. 1, Kaech'ŏn is located in Kaech'ŏn-si, P'yŏngnam, approximately 2.6 kilometers east of of the city of Kaech'ŏn and approximately 75 kilometers north-northeast of P'yŏngyang. The prison is reported to be subordinate to the Prisons Bureau of the Ministry of People's Security (*Bo-an-bu*), which is directly under the State Affairs Commission. Specifically, it would be under the control of the ministry's P'yŏngnam-si Provincial Bureau.[16]

Development

The precise date of the establishment of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn is unknown. Declassified satellite imagery from the 1960s indicates that the camp was established between December 15, 1962 and April 24, 1966, when the facility was captured on film by both U.S. KH-4A and KH-7 reconnaissance satellites.[17]

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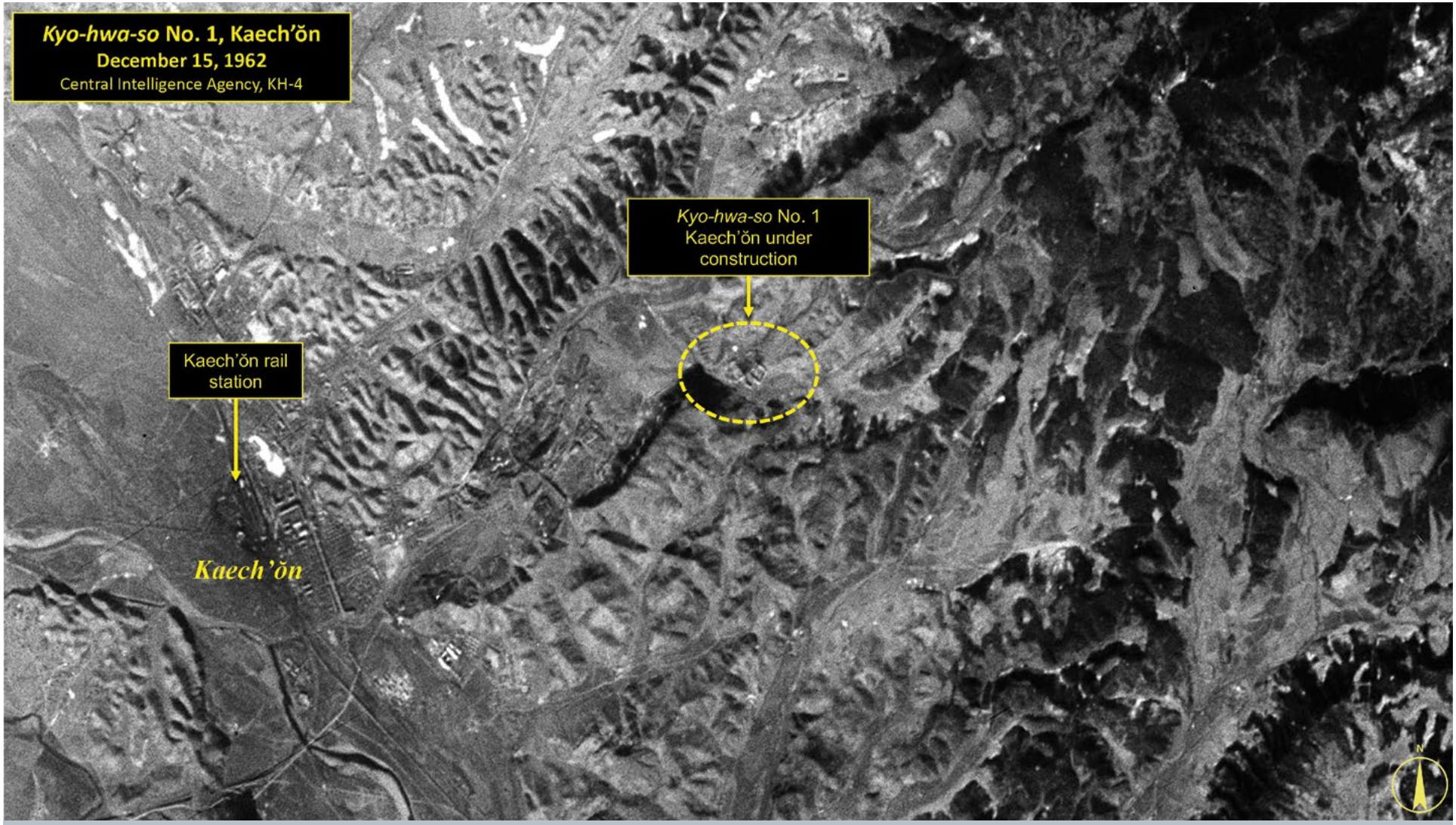
Figure 1



An overview of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn from December 15, 1962 as seen in a declassified 7.6-meter resolution image collected by a CIA KH-4 reconnaissance satellite.

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According to some accounts, *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 is assumed to be the oldest *kyo-hwa-so* in North Korea. These accounts report that it was originally known as the South Sinuiju Female *Kyo-hwa-so* operated by the State Security Department (currently the Ministry of State Security), but was relocated to the Kaech'ŏn area and placed under the Ministry of People's Security in March 1982.[18] If correct, this is only partially correct as satellite imagery clearly shows a detention facility here since the 1960s.

Imagery collected by a CIA KH-4 reconnaissance satellite on December 15, 1962 shows the initial stages of construction of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1. The image is of poor resolution and specific details cannot be identified. However, the facility does not appear to have a security perimeter. The central square of buildings that will house the various workshops and what may be one of the future headquarters and administration buildings, however, are just visible. Adjacent to the camp's northwest corner, a small village had been established to house camp staff and workers.

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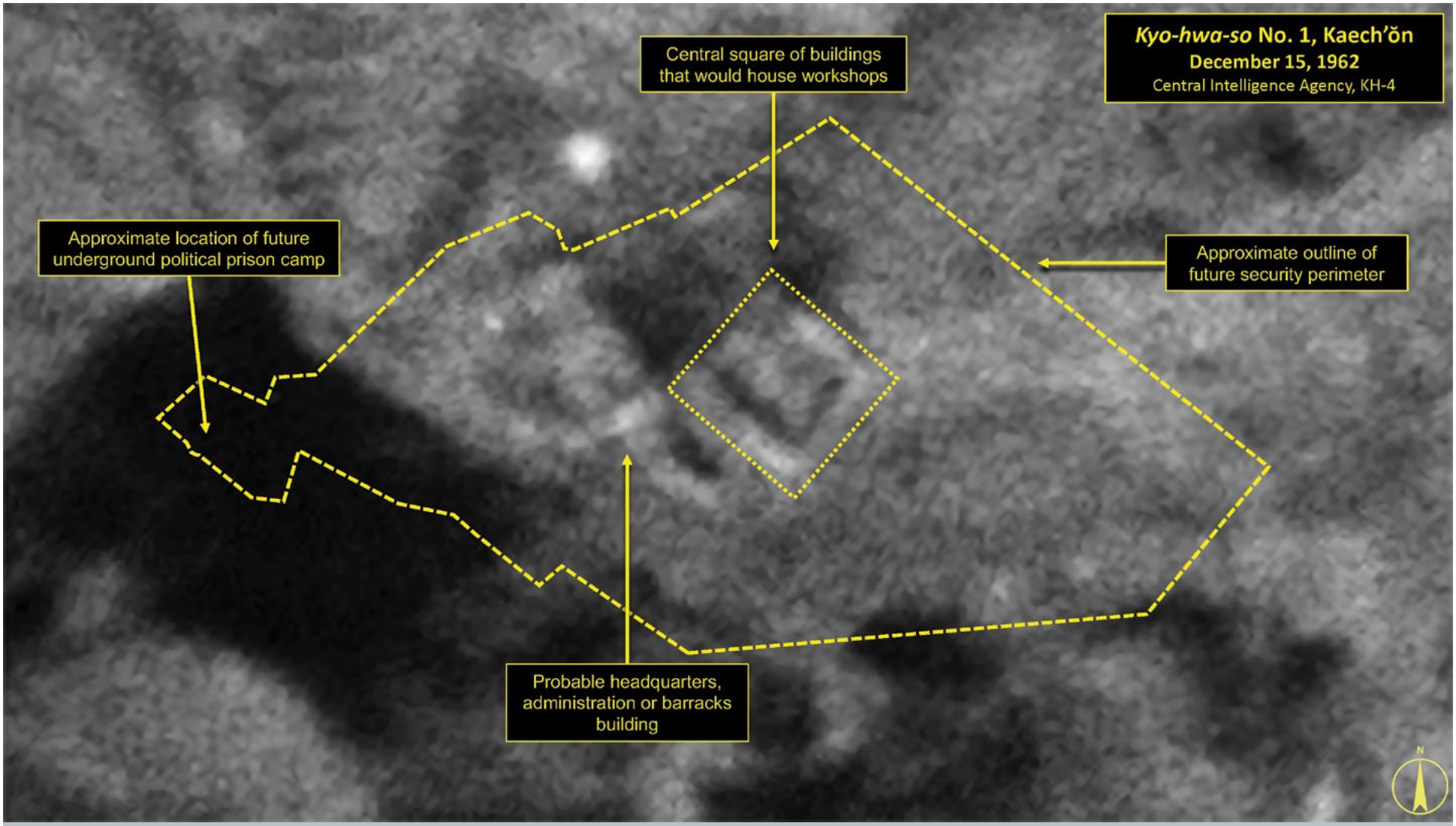
Figure 2



A blurry close-up view of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 from December 15, 1962 as seen in a declassified 7.6-meter resolution image collected by a CIA KH-4 reconnaissance satellite.

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By April 26, 1966, considerable construction progress had been made. An image collected on that date by a CIA high-resolution KH-7 reconnaissance satellite shows that approximately one-third of the security perimeter had been completed; two entrances, 28 structures for headquarters, administration, barracks, and support were now present; and construction on what has been reported by former prisoners as an underground political prison camp appears to have had started.[19] The guard towers seen in later imagery are not yet present. Within the future prison area, approximately 14 structures had been built or were under construction, including a large building for prisoner housing and the four central workshop buildings arranged in a square are clearly visible at the center of the area. While prisoners may have been present to assist with construction, it is unlikely that large numbers were being housed here at this time.

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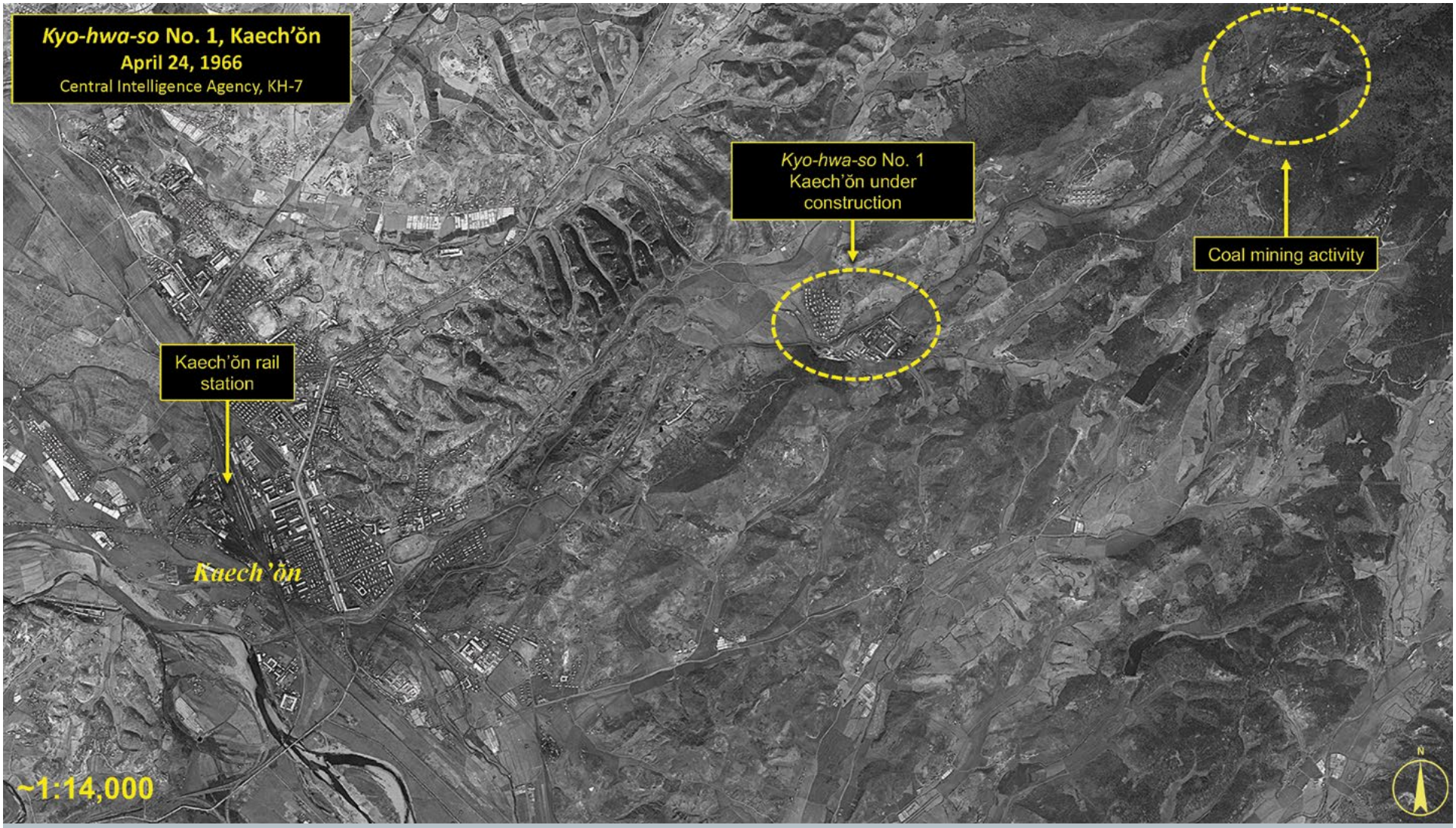
Figure 3



An overview of the Kaech'ŏn facility collected on April 24, 1966 by a .8 to 1.2 meters-meter resolution KH-7 reconnaissance satellite.

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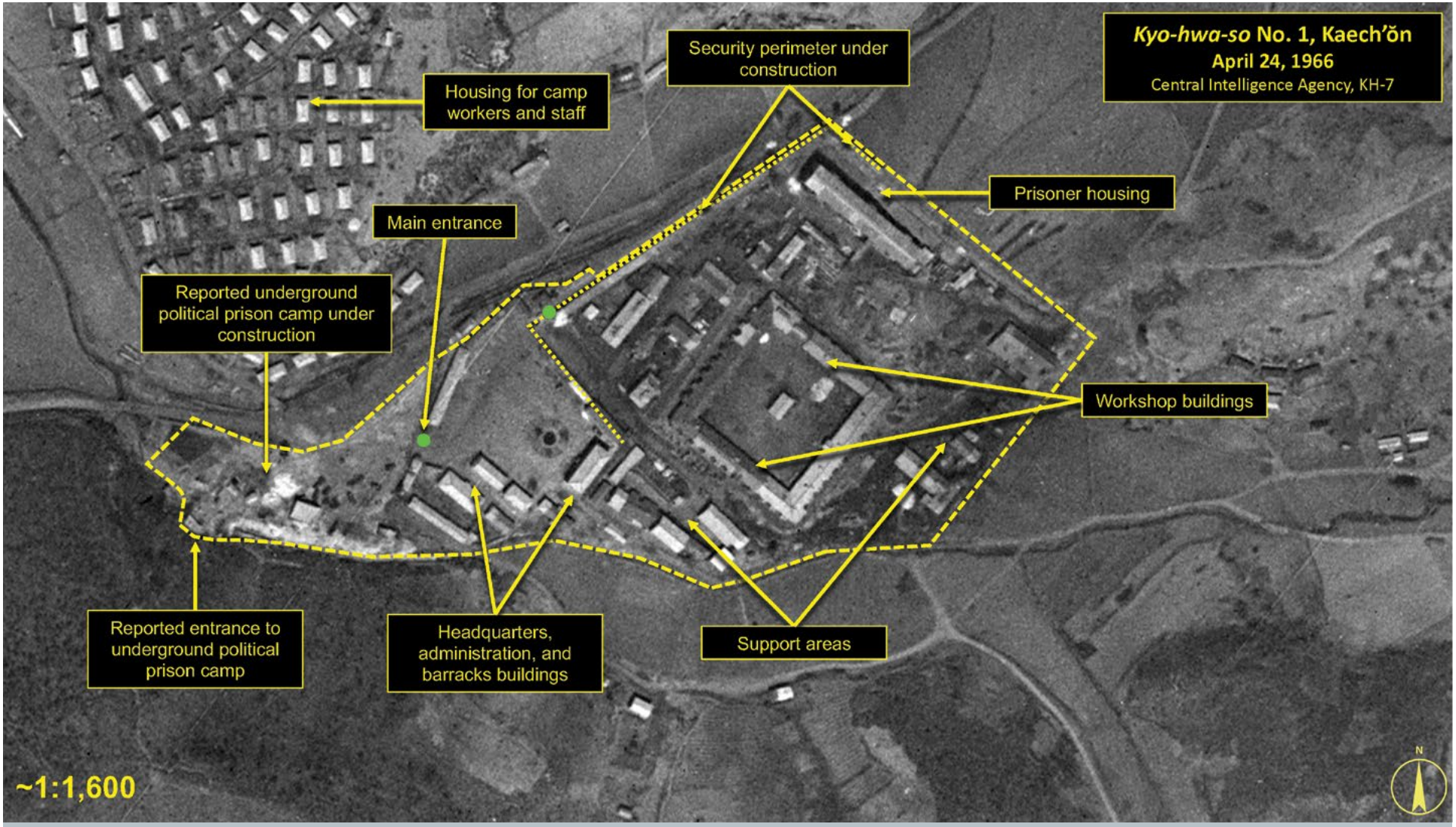
Figure 4



A close-up view of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 from a .8 to 1.2 meters-meter resolution KH-7 reconnaissance satellite, April 24, 1966.

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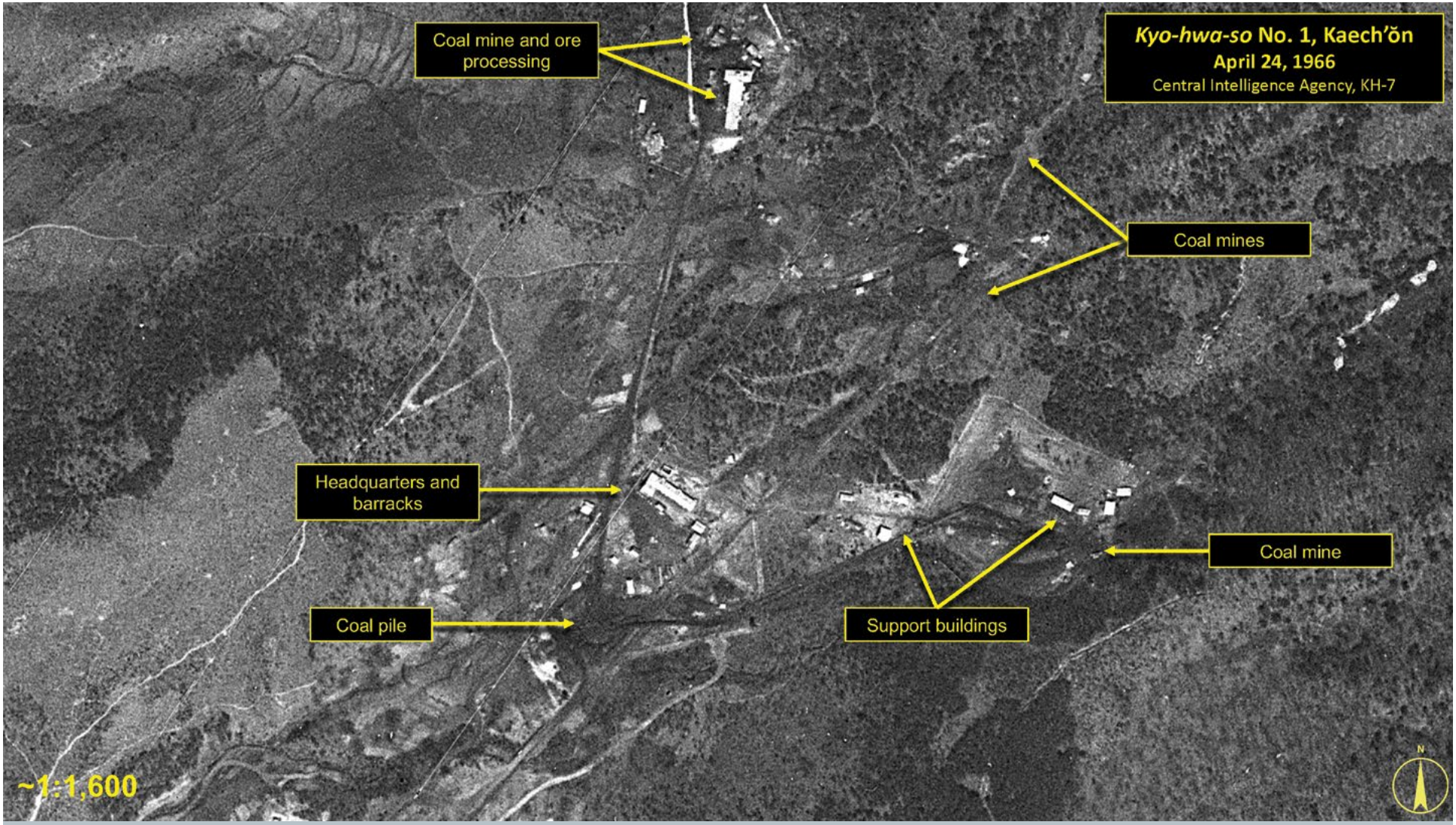
Figure 5



A view of the coal mining activity northeast of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 from a .8 to 1.2 meters-meter resolution KH-7 reconnaissance satellite, April 24, 1966.

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Coal mining activity (39.719885, 125.944841) consisting of several mines, a processing building, headquarters and barracks, support buildings, and a coal pile are present approximately 2.2-kilometers northeast of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 and were first observed in the April 24, 1966 image. This is likely the "coal mine" that prisoners from the 2000s describe as being near the prison and being mined by male prisoners.[20] It is unclear when this facility was established and when it was being mined by prisoners.

Although it is not at the same resolution as the 1966 KH-7 image, a 1.8-meter resolution KH-4B image collected on April 30, 1972 shows that considerable progress had been made during the previous six years and that the camp was likely operational. The perimeter security wall around the prison was complete with four guard towers present on the corners. There were a total of three entrances—one external and two internal. In the headquarters, administration, and barracks area, there were now approximately six buildings of various sizes. The main prison area then appears to have been divided into: prisoner housing and workshop; light industry, support, and vehicle maintenance; livestock and agricultural support; and workshop, warehouse, and storage areas. While the latter area was separated from the other areas by an internal entrance, it is unclear whether the prisoner housing and workshop areas were yet separated from the other areas by a wall. Work appeared to be ongoing at the underground political prison facility. The coal mining activity northeast of the camp remained active, although it cannot be determined if prisoners are being used in the mines.

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Figure 6

Overview of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 as seen on April 20, 1972 in a declassified 1.8-meter resolution image collected by a CIA KH-4B reconnaissance satellite.

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Figure 7

An April 20, 1972 close-up view of the camp showing the progress achieved during the previous six years.

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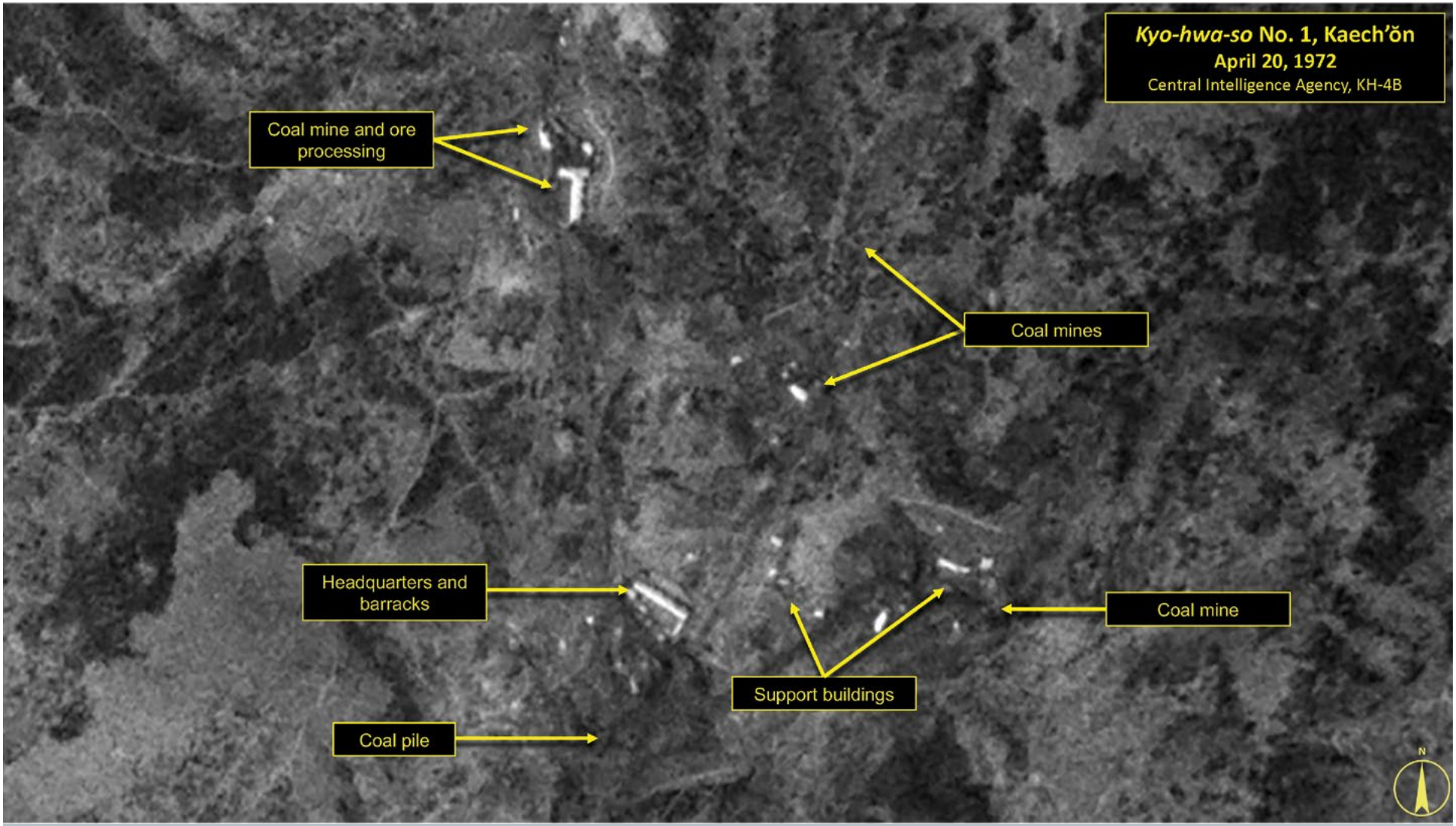
Figure 8



A view of the mining activity northeast of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 showing that the main facilities are still present and active.

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Regrettably, no high-resolution satellite imagery is readily available from 1972 through the early 2000s. However, imagery from December 5, 2002 indicates that numerous and significant changes had taken place during the intervening years and that the facility had essentially reached the size it would retain until the present. The security perimeter, consisting of a high wall, now encompassed the entire facility, including the underground political prison camp. In total, there were now seven guard towers (two at the underground prison) and seven entrances (two external and six internal).

Within the main prison, a second large building for prisoner housing had been built and a wall with an entrance now separated prisoner housing and the workshop areas from the rest of the prison. Additionally, there were now operational livestock and agriculture, light industry, support, and vehicle maintenance areas. A workshop, warehouse, and storage area were now operational and separated from the other prison areas by its own entrance. The headquarters, administration, and barracks area had expanded, a monument was now present, and a large building was under construction.

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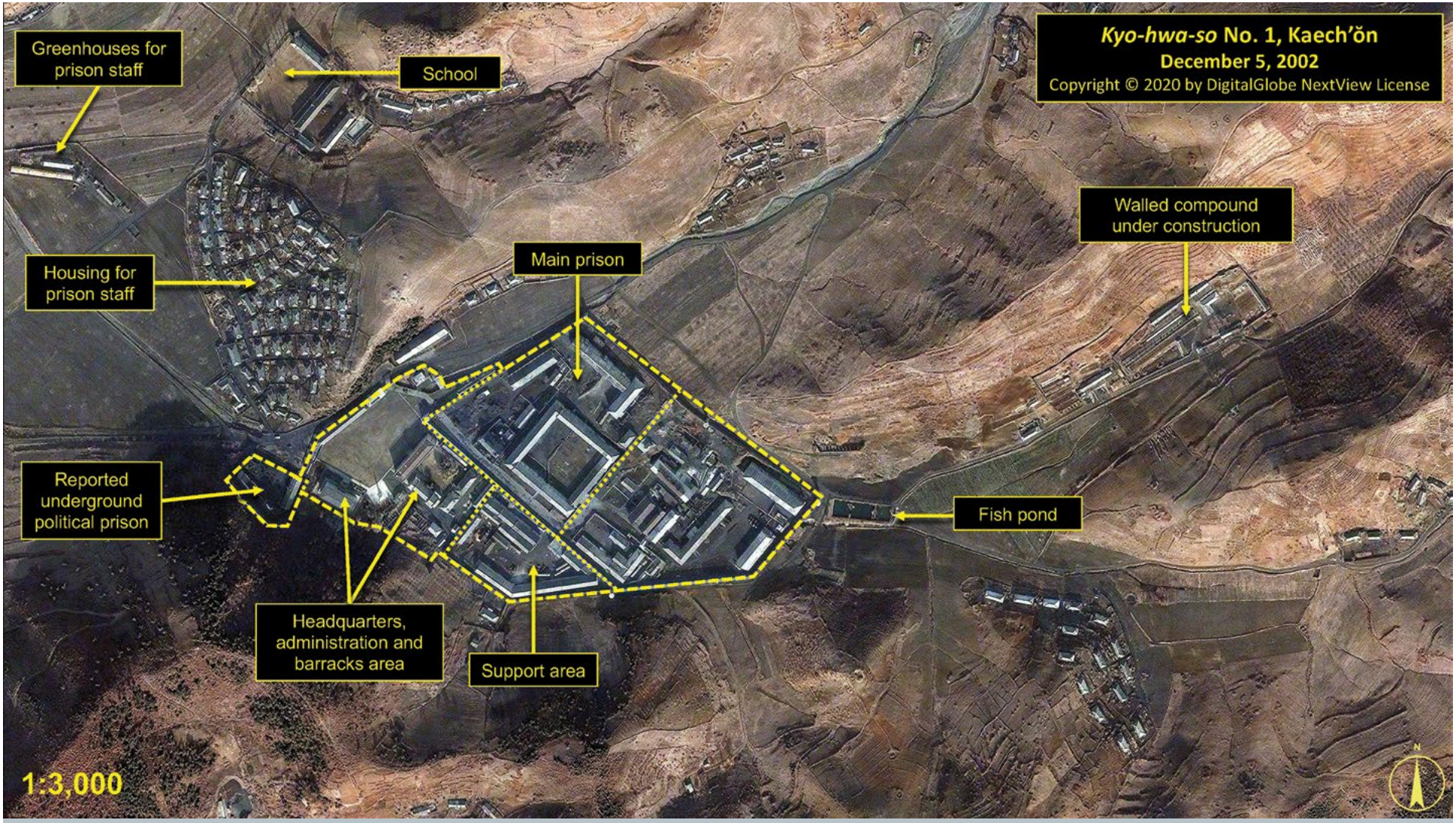
Figure 9



General view of the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 as seen in an image collected on December 5, 2002.

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The underground political prison camp appears to be complete with a separate enclosed security wall with two guard towers, a single external entrance, and two buildings. The two entrances to the underground facility are reported to be on the west and southwest sides of this small compound. This facility was likely operational sometime before this December 5, 2002 image.

The December 5, 2002 image also shows that a small partially walled compound was under construction approximately 350 meters east of the main prison.

Outside of the prison itself, the prison staff housing area had increased slightly in size; a small greenhouse complex was built to the northwest of this area and a school had been built to the northeast. Several agricultural structures (e.g., housing, barns, threshing houses, etc.) and a fish pond had also been built in the areas surrounding the prison.

Several significant changes were observed at the mining activity northeast of the prison. Most significant was the razing of what appears to be an ore processing building and the abandonment of several mines. Former prisoner testimony indicates that, by this time, male prisoners from the camp were being used to work the remaining coal mines.[21] This may be supported by the wall with gates that now encompass the headquarters and barracks buildings.

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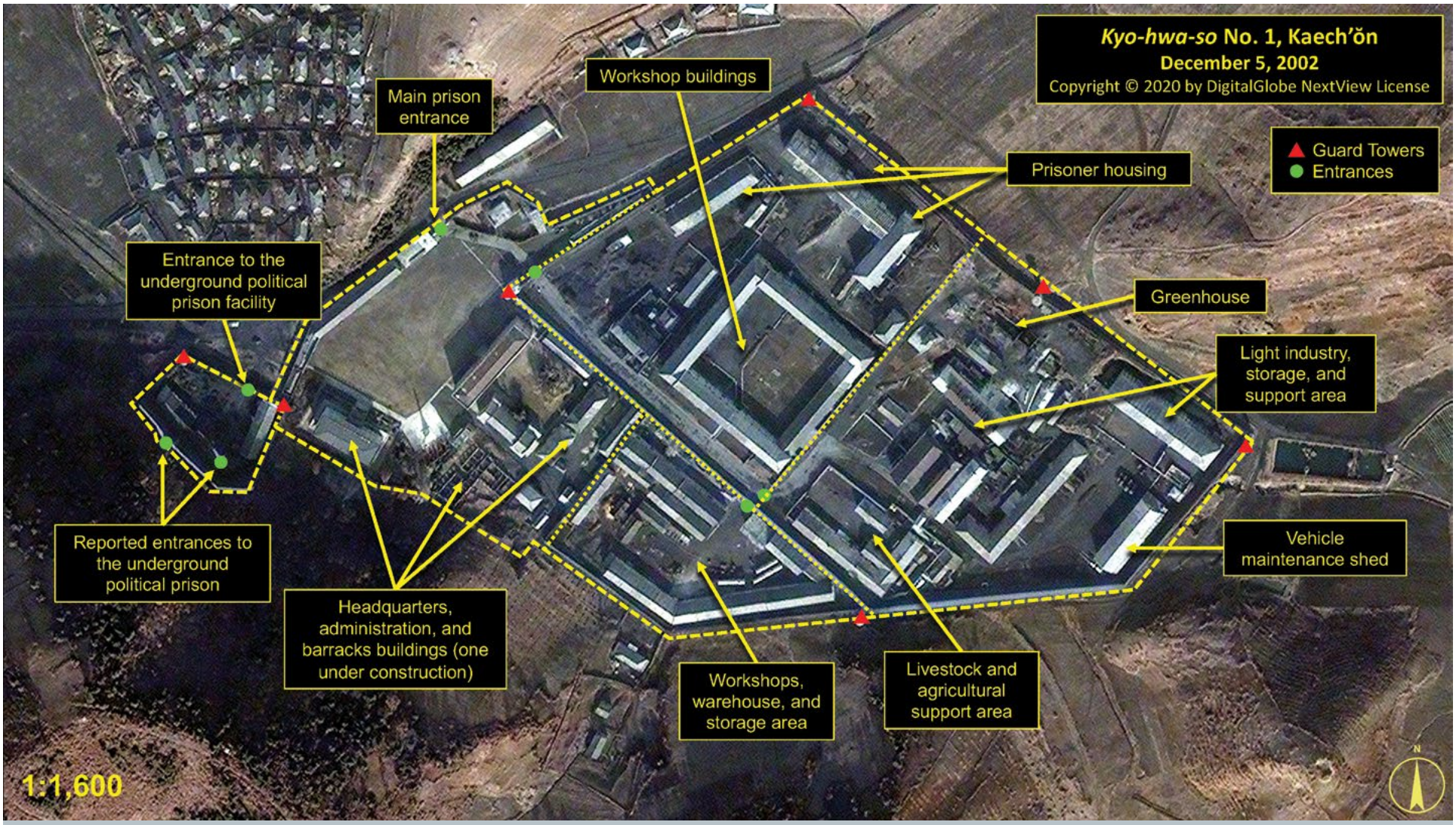
Figure 10



Detailed view of the prison showing the numerous changes that had occurred during the intervening years. Notable are the completed underground political prison camp and the construction and separation of distinct functional areas, December 5, 2002.

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Figure 11

A view of the mining activity northeast of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 showing that while the area is still active, the ore processing building has been razed and several mines appear to be abandoned. Additionally, the headquarters and barracks buildings have been enclosed by a wall with gates.

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An image collected on December 31, 2010 shows that, with one exception, only minor changes (e.g., small buildings being razed or built, etc.) had occurred at *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 during the previous eight years. These changes were typical of what would be expected at such a small prison facility and provide no significant insights into any changes in population size or missions. The one exception witnessed is the main entrance of the camp being rebuilt sometime around 2007–2008 with a second entrance.

No changes were noted at the underground political prison camp that, according to former prisoner testimony, had been repurposed as a labor training camp by this time (see below). In the areas surrounding the prison a small number of new agriculture-related buildings had been built.

The walled compound 350 meters east of the main prison, while still under construction, was now completely walled in and had guard towers on the southwest and northeast corners. The only way to access this was via the road that passed the main prison and this is a clear indication of direct association between the two.

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Figure 12

General view of the of the prison as seen in an image collected on December 31, 2010.

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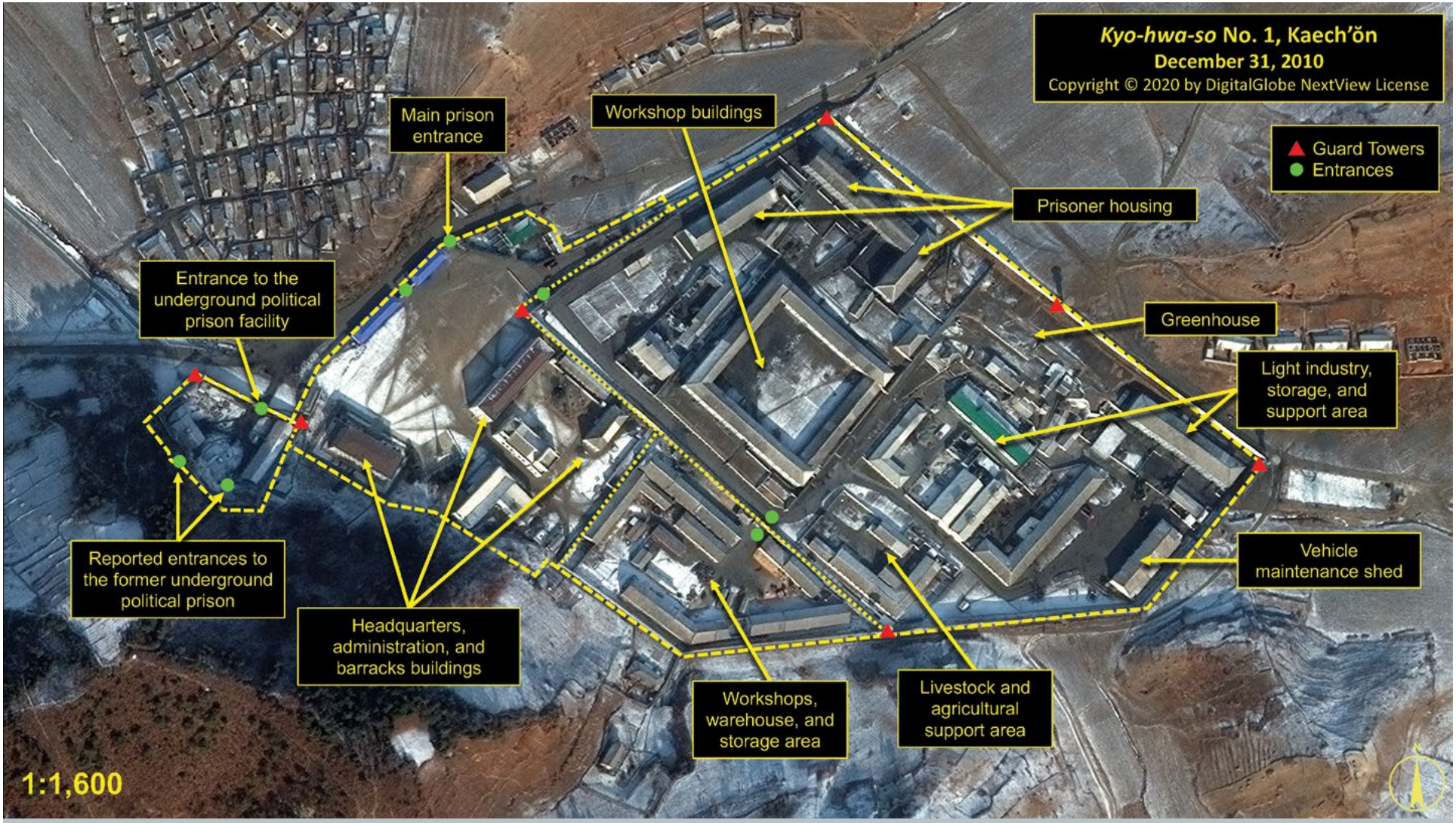
Figure 13



Detailed view of the prison showing that, with the exception of the new entrance, only minor changes had occurred during the previous eight years, December 31, 2010.

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One of the more recent images of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn was collected on April 1, 2019. As with the 2010 image, only minor changes were observed during the intervening nine years. Among these were minor construction near the prison entrance and a building that was expanded during 2015 in the labor training camp facility. Once again, these developments are typical of what would be expected at such a small prison facility and provide no significant insights into any changes in population size or missions.

Outside the camp, the housing area was expanded during 2014–2017 with the addition of two large two- or three-story office-type buildings and an 11-meter-wide circular structure of unknown purpose east of the village.

Sometime between 2013 and 2014 a second smaller walled compound was built east of the main prison and on the east side of the existing walled compound. This new compound also had two guard towers on the southwest and northeast corners. The April 1, 2019 image shows that construction of the walled compound east of the main prison had been completed and that it was now divided into two distinct parts.

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Figure 14

An overview of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 from April 1, 2019.

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Figure 15

General view of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 as seen in an image collected on April 1, 2019.

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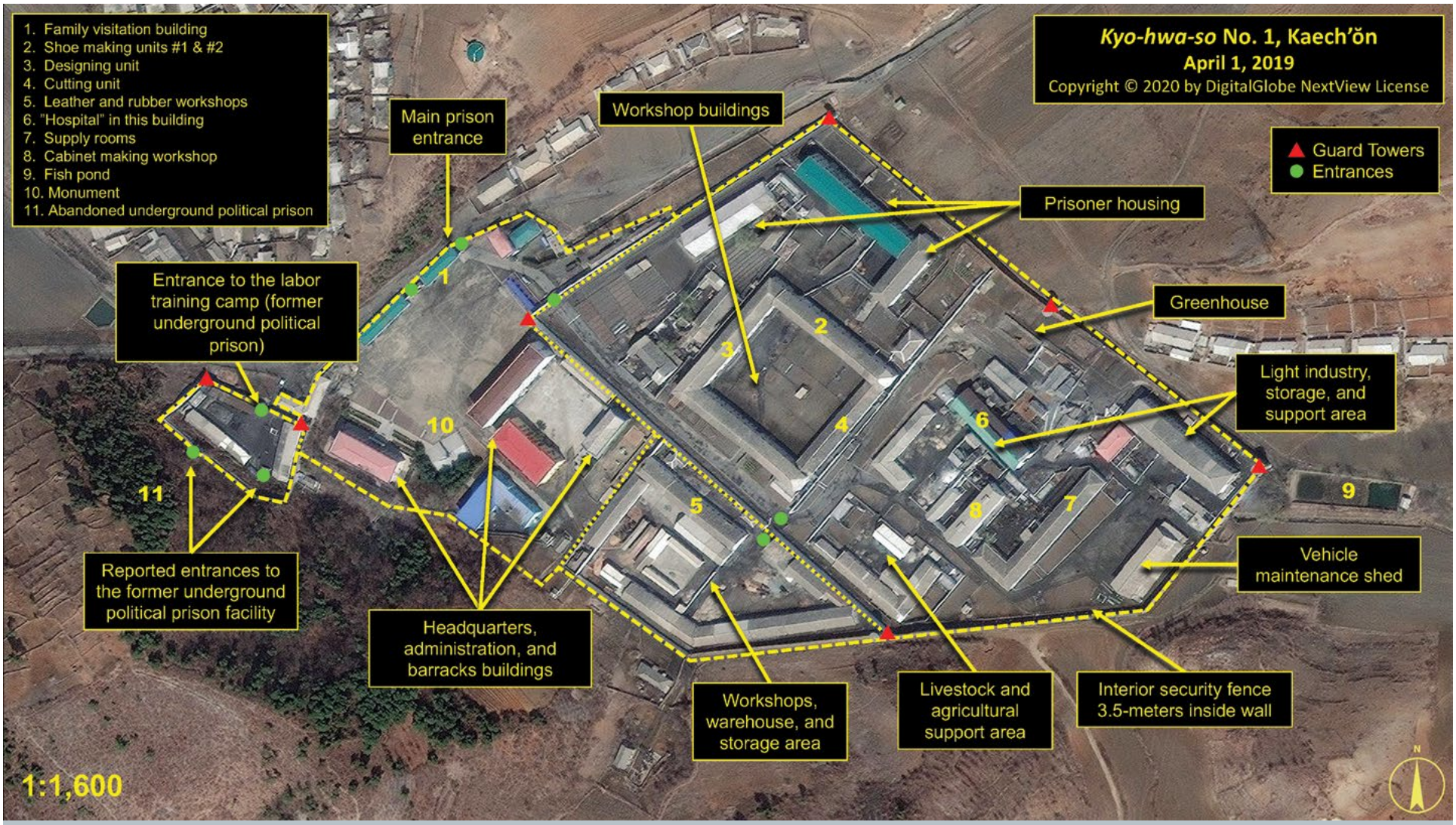
Figure 16



Detailed view of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 showing the prison as of April 1, 2019.

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Imagery Analysis[22]

Based upon limited publicly available information, former prisoner testimony, and high-resolution satellite imagery, *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn and its immediate surroundings can be separated into the following physical features:

- Security perimeters (internal and external), entrance and guard positions
- Main prison
- Headquarters, administration, barracks, housing and support facilities
- Labor training camp (with a former underground political prison camp)
- Walled compounds

Security Perimeter, Entrances, and Guard Positions

The prison's security perimeter consists of a combination of walls, entrances, and guard towers. These not only separate *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 from the surrounding countryside, but also segment it internally. Neither the external perimeter of the camp nor the interior infrastructure have changed significantly since 2010.

The external perimeter, which surrounds the main prison, headquarters, administration and barracks area and labor training camp (with a former underground political prison) is approximately 1,590 meters long (1,740 yards long) and encompasses approximately 107,190 square meters (128,199 square yards). There is a total of eight entrances to the facility—two main and three internal entrances for *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, and one main and two underground entrances for the labor training camp (with a former underground political prison).

A total of seven guard towers are distributed atop the walls—five around the main prison and two at the labor training camp. Aside from the wall's height and the guard towers, the main prison wall is partially supplemented by what appears to be an internal (presumably barbed-wire) fence set approximately 3.5 meters inside the wall.

All walls and entrances appear to be well maintained and in good repair. The guard towers are well positioned to provide overlapping fields-of-view of the camp and appear to be well maintained and in good repair.

Main Prison

There are two separate prison compounds at *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1—the main prison and the labor training camp.

The main prison is itself composed of three functional areas that are separated by internal walls and entrances—prisoner housing and workshops; light industry, support, and vehicle maintenance; and workshop, warehouse, and storage. Taken together, these three sections are surrounded by an approximately 1,195-meter-long (1,306 yards) high trapezoidal wall encompassing 78,940 square meters (94,411 square yards), with five guard towers and three entrances.

The prisoner housing and workshop area occupies the northern corner of the prison and consists of two attached three-story buildings, four large two- or three-story workshops arranged in a square at the center of the prison, and approximately a dozen support buildings and sheds of unknown purposes. Former prisoner testimony indicates that the male and female prisoners are housed in the same housing structures with the "…first floor [used] for [the] kitchen and storage, the second floor for the female inmates, and the third floor for the male inmates."[23] Reportedly, "individuals sentenced to imprisonment for life were held in separate buildings under full control of their access, living in a cell with around seventy inmates."[24] Within the four central buildings there are workshops

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for shoe manufacturing (units #1 and #2), cutting, design, and others.[25] This area is separated from the light industry, support, and vehicle maintenance area by a wall and entrance.

Former prisoners indicate that male and female prisoners are assigned separate work, with female facilities reportedly being sub-divided into separate areas for those sentenced to "indefinite correctional labor and those sentenced to finite-term correctional labor."[26] Work assigned to female prisoners typically consists of agriculture, animal husbandry, knitting, vegetable farming, fruit trees, and plowing. Work assigned to male prisoners typically consists of working in the "covering unit" that manufactures shoes, belts, pistol holsters, military boots, and ankle boots, or at a coal mine nearby."[27] This "covering unit" likely is referring to what other prisoners identify as the "leather and rubber" and "shoe[-]making" workshops.[28]

The light industry, support, and vehicle maintenance area occupies the eastern corner of the prison and consists of approximately 30 single- or two-story structures, sheds, and greenhouses.[29] Satellite imagery and former prisoner testimony indicate that within these structures are a woodworking shop, a cabinet manufacturing workshop, supply rooms, a medical clinic identified as a "hospital," a vehicle maintenance shed, livestock pens for rabbits and goats, and two greenhouses. The latter structures are used to provide prison officials with fresh meat and produce. In addition to maintaining these agricultural activities within the prison, prisoners are reported to be tasked with working the surrounding cultivated fields and orchards. The noted "hospital" is more likely a rudimentary clinic with limited medical supplies, equipment, and capabilities. Former prisoner testimony claims that 90% of the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 prisoners were suffering from malnutrition and 10% of various illnesses.[30] Other reports state that "On average, 2 to 3 prisoners died every day from tuberculosis and undernourishment."[31] This is a high rate of mortality and requires further verification.

The workshop, warehouse, and storage area occupies the southern corner of the prison and consists of approximately 20 single- or two-story structures. Satellite imagery and escapee testimony indicate that within these structures are leather and rubber workshops, a warehouse, storage buildings, and a repair shop.[32] This area is separated from the previous two areas by a wall and entrance.

Located within the western and northern sections of the prison is the headquarters, administration, and barracks area compound. It is separated from the outside by two entrances and from the internal sections of the camp by walls and a single internal entrance. This area consists of eleven one-, two-, and three-story buildings, a monument, and the two main entrances to the facility. When the entrance to the camp was rebuilt around 2007–2008, two buildings were replaced by a smaller building, a second entrance was added, and the existing building, now located between the two entrances, was designated as a "family visitation building."[33]

In general, the prison's various functional areas appear to be operational and well maintained by North Korean standards.

Labor Training Camp (with a former underground political prison camp)[34]

Located in the northwest corner of the prison is a separate walled compound surrounded by a 227-meter-long (248 yards) wall that encompasses approximately 3,160 square meters (3,780 square

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yards) and has two guard towers and a single external entrance. This compound has been identified in former prisoner testimony as being a Ministry of People's Security (*Bo-an-so*) labor training camp with approximately 200 prisoners.[35] The prisoners in the camp were allowed family visits of 30 minutes every month and approximately 80% are reported to have had visitors.

Former prisoner testimony further indicates that sometime prior to 2014, a small Ministry of State Security [formerly State Security Department] (*Bo-wi-bu*) underground political prison camp with two entrances was located here, extending into the adjacent hill mass to the west. Prior to 2014, eight former Kim Il-sung advisors ("anti-republic prisoners") were detained here, but seven died. The remaining prisoner was then transferred and the Ministry of State Security transferred the facility to the Ministry of People's Security. The underground facility was reportedly abandoned sometime between 2014 and 2015 due to flooding and partial collapse.

No further details are available and all information concerning the underground political prison facility and labor training camp requires further clarification.

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Figure 17

A close-up of the labor training camp (with a former underground political prison camp) on the northwest corner of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, April 1, 2019.

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Walled Compounds

There are two small walled compounds that are located 350 meters and 650 meters east of the main prison. Both have guard towers on their southwest and northeast corners. The larger and closer of the two compounds was under early construction in the December 5, 2002 satellite image. By the time of the December 31, 2010 image, the compound was completely walled in and had guard towers on the southwest and northeast corners. Internal construction, however, did not yet appear to be complete. An April 1, 2019 image shows that construction has been completed. It is now divided into two distinct parts and encompasses approximately 10,250 square meters (12,260 square yards).

Sometime between 2013 and 2014, a second smaller walled compound was built east of the main prison and on the east side of the existing walled compound. As of the April 1, 2019 image, this compound had two guard towers on the southwest and northeast corners and encompassed approximately 2,840 square meters (3,400 square yards).

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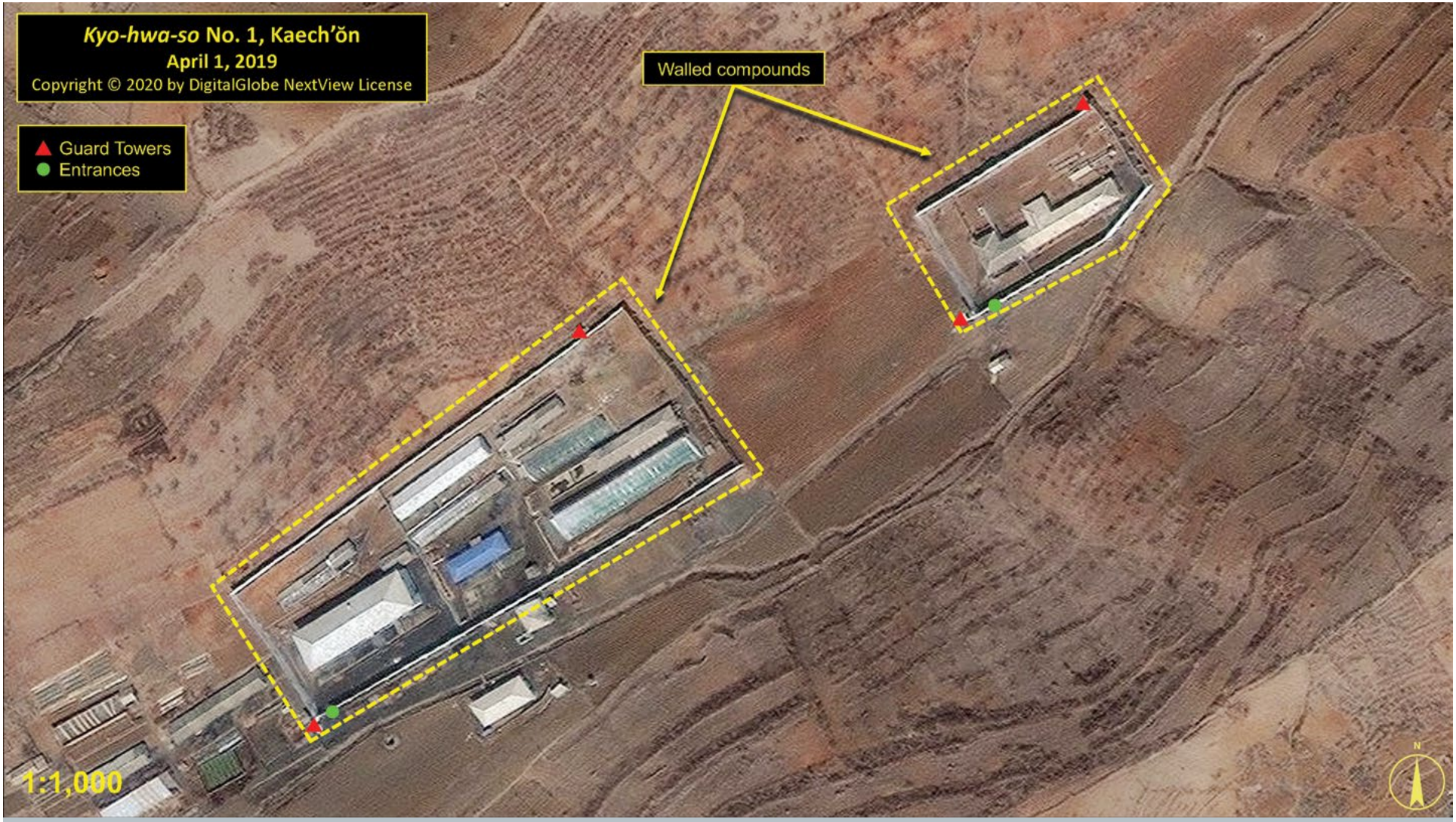
Figure 18



A close-up of the two walled compounds east of the main prision.

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The construction of these two walled compounds, their proximity to the main prison, and the fact that they are in a dead-end valley clearly indicate that they are directly associated with *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1. The purpose of these compounds is presently unclear. However, it would appear to be logical that they house a separate class of prisoners, are engaged in a separate type of activity, or a combination of both.

Additional Activities

A former prisoner has explained that a coal mine was located near the camp and that male prisoners were forced to work in it (this is common work for prisoners in North Korea). Small-scale coal mining activity approximately 2.2-kilometers northeast of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 was first observed in satellite imagery from an April 24, 1966 image. This coal mining activity now consists of several mines, a headquarters and barracks area encompassed by a high wall, a few support buildings, several tailings piles, and a coal pile. That this is most likely the "coal mine" identified by the prisoner is strongly suggested by the headquarters and barracks area being surrounded by a high wall with a single gate and a guard tower (added between 2014 and 2016) on its southeast corner.[36] While the area still appears active in 2019, it is no longer being exploited at the level it was during the 1960s as is indicated by the apparent abandoning of several mines and razing of what may have been an ore processing building.

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Figure 19

A view of the coal-mining activity northeast of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, April 1, 2019.

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Figure 20

A close-up of the headquarters and barracks area at the coal-mining activity, April 1, 2019. Clearly visible are the high wall encompassing the area, the single gate, and the guard position on top of the southeast corner.

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Within one kilometer of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, there are at least seven traditional burial grounds. However, no link has been established between these and the prison. According to former prisoner testimony, *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 follows reported practices at other North Korean detention facilities and buries deceased prisoners in the surrounding agricultural fields. Typically, deceased prisoners are laid in shallow, hastily dug pits and covered with a thin layer of soil. This, at times, results in body parts surfacing. When there were large numbers of deceased prisoners to be buried, "they dug a hole as big as a house."[37] While analysis of the limited *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 satellite imagery currently available has yet to provide positive corroboration of these burial sites, it does not mean that they have not occurred as reported. Such burials, except large mass graves, are at the limits of current satellite imagery even under ideal conditions. At least one reported burial site is in the general location of a very old and weathered traditional burial ground. The fact that North Korean authorities would reuse such a location shows the lack of respect for traditional Korean burial and ancestor worship practices. To date, there have been no reports of a crematory being associated with *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 and none is readily observed in the available imagery.

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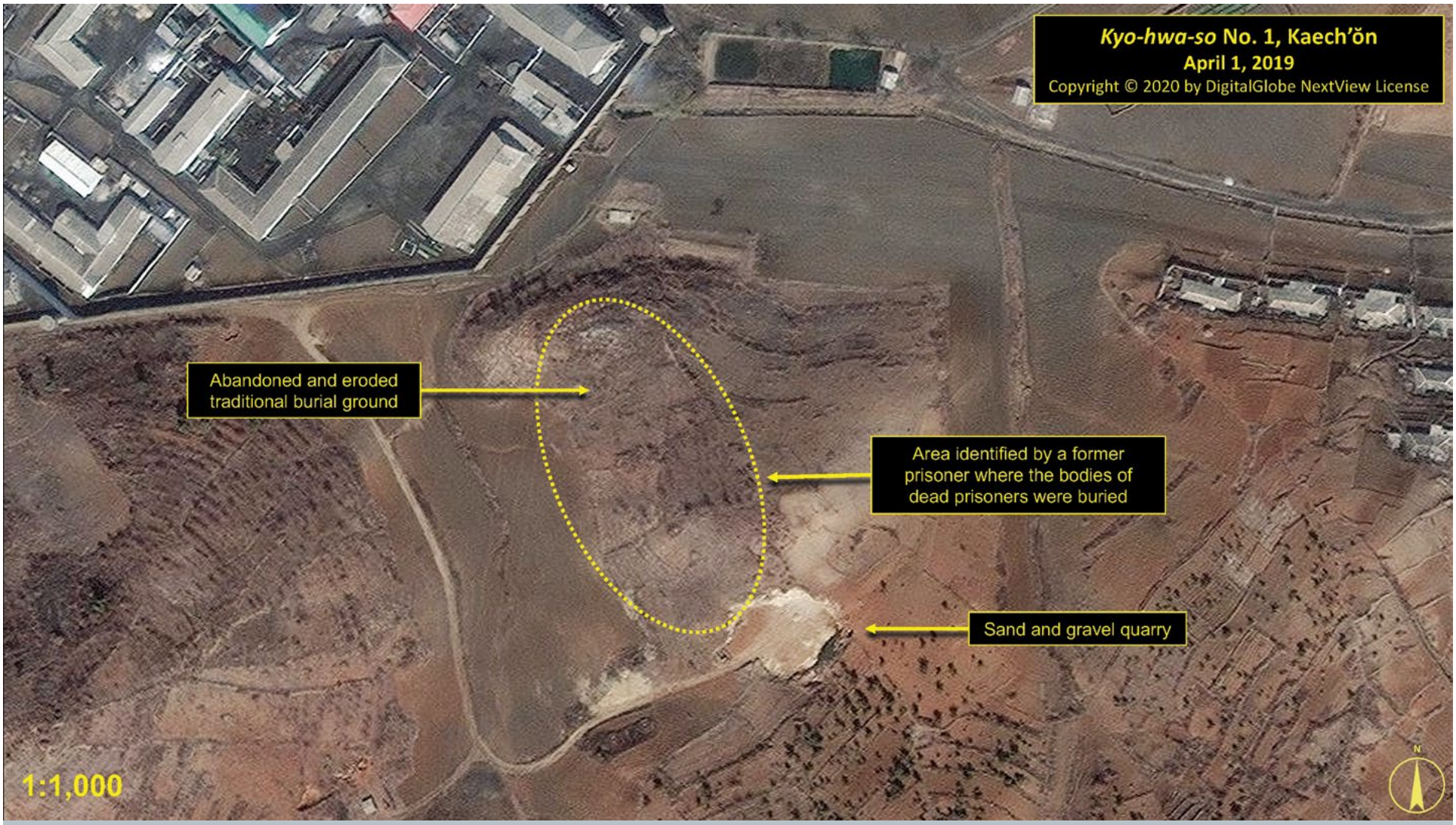
Figure 21



A close-up of the first of two locations in agricultural fields outside the main prison where former prisoner testimony states deceased prisoners were buried in shallow graves, new prison, April 1, 2019.

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Approximately 175 meters south of the main prison is a small sand and gravel quarry. Given its proximity it is likely that the prisoners work the quarry as needed by local requirements.

There are at least nine military garrisons (likely for both active and paramilitary reserve forces), nine air defense artillery sites, and no SAM sites observed within five kilometers of the prison. The closest air facility to *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 is the Korean People's Air Force's Kaech'ŏn Airbase located 5 kilometers north. This is an operational fighter base, and, due to its mission, organization, and location, almost certainly provides no support to *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn.

While the prison is probably connected to the regional telephone network, it is likely via buried service as no evidence of overhead service was identified in satellite imagery. An electrical substation is located 4.7 kilometers west-northwest of the prison and may be the source of the facility's electric service. Additionally, a single high-voltage power line passes approximately 800 meters west of the prison. The nearest rail facility is the Kaech'ŏn rail station 3.2 kilometers to the west of the prison.

Assessment

Analysis of limited publicly available information, former escapee testimony, and high-resolution satellite imagery of Kyo-hwa-so No. 1 and its environs, collected during 1962–1972 and 2002–2019, indicates that:

- *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1 is a prison facility that has been operational since sometime between 1962 and 1966
- The associated walled compounds are operational prison facilities that have been operational since approximately 2010–2013
- It is, by North Korean standards, a very mature and well-maintained prison facility. The associated walled compounds are newer, but are also well maintained
- There have been no significant changes to the physical size, including prisoner housing structures, of the main prison since the end of 2010
- Perimeter walls and entrances of all facilities appear to be well maintained and in good repair
- Guard positions at all facilities are well situated to provide overlapping fields-of-view of the prison and appear well maintained and in good repair
- Headquarters, administrative, barracks, housing, support buildings, and grounds are well maintained and in good repair
- The grounds and buildings for prisoner housing appear to be well maintained and in a good state of repair
- The primary activities of the prisoners at the main prison appear to be a combination of light manufacturing and agricultural production
- The primary activities of the prisoners in the walled compounds are unknown, but may be related to agricultural production
- The prisoner population of the main facility has likely remained relatively stable since 2010
- The construction of the two walled compounds between 2010 and 2013 suggests that the combined prison population has increased
- Open source reports and former prisoner testimony of a prison population of between 2,000 and 6,000, while of a wide margin, are likely to be accurate

Recommendations

Continued background investigation and ongoing monitoring of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn and its associated walled compounds are recommended to provide a more detailed accounting of its

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previous operations back to at least 1966 and to develop an objective baseline understanding of its continuing activities, maintain an evidentiary catalog of physical changes at the facility, update its status, develop accurate evidence of prisoner population size, assess the health of prisoners, and assist with the identification of reported human rights abuses. It is strongly recommended that any investigations also include the examination of the background and details of the reported underground political prison facility; the reported high rate of mortality and malnutrition; and the reported burial of deceased prisoners in the agricultural fields adjacent to the prison.

Gazetteer

Location	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)
Kaech'ŏn	39.700556°	125.893333°
Kaech'ŏn *Ro-dong-dan-ryeon-dae*	39.708068°	125.919465°
Kyo-hwa-so No. 1, Kaech'ŏn	39.708310°	125.923356°
Kyo-hwa-so No. 1, mining activity	39.719885°	125.944841°

Note

HRNK would like to extend a special note of thanks to several individuals for their gracious assistance in preparing this report. Former prisoner Kim Il-soon (pseudonym) for her courageous testimony about her experiences in *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1. Hangyun Kim for his excellent interpretation and translation assistance. Hayne Park for transcribing the interview with Ms. Kim into Korean and English. Allen Anderson, Bobby Holt, and Ronald Bohmuller for their gracious support of HRNK's efforts to document North Korea's political prison system and the tragic conditions present within that system.

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Endnotes

1 Declassified KH-4 satellite imagery has a best ground resolution of about 7.6 meters, KH-4B of 1.8 meters and KH-7 of .8 to 1.2 meters.
2 UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry*, para. 1033.
3 Robert Collins and Amanda Mortwedt Oh, *From Cradle to Grave: The Path of North Korean Innocents*, (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2017), available at https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Collins_Cradle_to_Grave_WEB_FINALFINAL.pdf.
4 UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry*, para. 1220(b).
5 HRNK has published fifteen prison camp reports over the last five years as part of an ongoing effort to monitor the prison camps. These reports are available at https://www.hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php?page=3.
6 David Hawk with Amanda Mortwedt Oh, *The Parallel Gulag: North Korea's 'An-jeon-bu' Prison Camps*, (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2017), available at https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_The_Parallel_Gulag_Web.pdf.
7 This information comes from open source documents and commercial satellite imagery.
8 *Bo-an-so* refers to a police station.
9 Previous reports in this project can be found at, https://www.hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php.
10 Former prisoner and researchers indicate that the name of this facility is "*Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn," however, following historical DPRK practices it may also have other designations.
11 The term "high resolution" in this report refers to digital satellite images with a ground sample distance (GSD) of less than .7 meters. The GSD is the distance between pixel centers when measured on the ground. Analog (film) satellite imagery is measured in ground resolution (see note #1 above)
12 Products may also include clothing. United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247.
13 *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 83, 88, 107-108; Lee Seung-joo, *A Series of Detention Facilities in North Korea: Kaechon Kyo-hwa-so No.1, 'Message from Survivors'* (Seoul: NKDB), 2016; Hawk, David and Oh, Amanda Mortwedt. *The Parallel Gulag: North Korea's "An-jeon-bu" Prison Camps*, (Washington, D.C., Committee for Human Rights in North Korea), 2017, p. 26; *North Korean Detention Facilities - Kyo-Hwa-So* (Seoul: NKDB) 2015; and United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247.
14 For example, Interview of former *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; Hawk, David and Oh, Amanda Mortwedt. *The Parallel Gulag: North Korea's "An-jeon-bu" Prison Camps*, (Washington, D.C., Committee for Human Rights in North Korea), 2017, p. 26, https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_The_Parallel_Gulag_Web.pdf; *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; *North Korean Detention Facilities - Kyo-Hwa-So*, (Seoul: NKDB), 2015; United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIDPRK/Report/A.HRC.25.CRP.1_ENG.doc.
15 Bermudez Jr., Joseph S., Dinville, Andy and Eley, Mike. *Imagery Analysis of Camp 16*, (Washington, D.C.: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea [HRNK], 2015) available at https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/ASA_HRNK_Camp16_v8_fullres_FINAL_12_15_15.pdf and Bermudez Jr., Joseph S. *Imagery Analysis: North Korea's Camp No. 15, Update*, (Washington, D.C.: HRNK, 2014) available at http://hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Camp%2025%20Update%20Good.pdf.
16 "Officer at North Korean 'Labor Training Center' Killed by Vengeful Former Inmate," *Radio Free Asia*, May 9, 2019, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/labor-training-center-north-korea-05092019160322.html; Interview of former Kyo-hwa-so No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; *North Korean Detention Facilities - Kyo-Hwa-So*, (Seoul: NKDB), 2015; and United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247.
17 HRNK anticipates that we will be able to further refine the date of the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn's establishment in future updates when additional declassified satellite imagery from the 1960s is examined.
18 Lee Seung-joo, *A Series of Detention Facilities in North Korea: Kaechon Kyo-hwa-so No.1, 'Message from Survivors'* (Seoul: NKDB), 2016; *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; and Hawk, David and Oh, Amanda Mortwedt. *The Parallel Gulag: North Korea's "An-jeon-bu" Prison Camps*, (Washington, D.C., Committee for Human Rights in North Korea), 2017, p. 26, https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_The_Parallel_Gulag_Web.pdf.
19 What little information that is available about this facility is included throughout this report for ease of description.

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20 Interview of former *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108.

21 Ibid.

22 The following sources were used throughout this section: Interview of former *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, "Political Prison Camps in North Korea Today." http://nkdb.org/2012/main.php; Hawk, David. The Hidden Gulag: Second Edition. (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012), pp. 3, 63, 79 and 223, available at http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/HRNK_HiddenGulag2_Web_5-18.pdf; Hawk, David. *The Hidden Gulag: Third Edition*. (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2013), pp. 22 and 25, available at http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/NKHiddenGulag_DavidHawk(2).pdf; Hawk, David. *The Hidden Gulag: Fourth Edition*. (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015), pg. 8, available at http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_HiddenGulag4_FINAL.pdf; Kim, Soo-am, Kook-shin Kim, Soon-hee Lim, Hyun-joon Chon, Kyu-chang Lee, and Jung-hyun Cho. *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea, 2003-2013*. Seoul, Korea: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2003-2013. http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_04_01.jsp; KINU White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014, (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, July 2014), pp. 180-81, 189, 194 and 624, (hereafter: KINU2014) available at: www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/; *KINU White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2015*, (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, September 2015), pp. 115-116, 122, 126 and 517, (hereafter: KINU2015) available at: www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/; and *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, A/HRC/25/CRP.1, (New York: UN Human Rights Council, 7 February 2014), pp. 222-224 and 263, available at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIDPRK/Report/A.HRC.25.CRP.1_ENG.doc.

23 Interview of former *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; Lee Seung-joo, *A Series of Detention Facilities in North Korea: Kaechon Kyo-hwa-so No.1, 'Message from Survivors'* (Seoul: NKDB), 2016; *North Korean Detention Facilities - Kyo-Hwa-So*, (Seoul: NKDB), 2015; and United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 This description, which is based upon the testimony of a former prisoner from the mid-2000s, differs somewhat from that presented in Lee Seung-joo, *A Series of Detention Facilities in North Korea: Kaechon Kyo-hwa-so No.1, 'Message from Survivors'* (Seoul: NKDB), 2016, which states, "Kaech'ŏn *kyo-hwa-so* was originally for female inmates but its function had changed several times. In the early 2000s, Kaech'ŏn *kyo-hwa-so* was operated as a facility for inmates sentenced to prison for life, and then it mainly held female inmates sentenced to prison for life. In March 2007, according to the policy of making inmates to be held in their hometown facilities regardless of sex, it is known that there were broad scale transfers in Kaech'ŏn *kyo-hwa-so*."

27 The coal mine is presently unlocated. *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 83 & 88.

28 Interview of former Kyo-hwa-so No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; *North Korean Detention Facilities - Kyo-Hwa-So*, (Seoul: NKDB), 2015; and United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 83, 88, 107-108.

32 Interview of former *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108; *North Korean Detention Facilities - Kyo-Hwa-So*, (Seoul: NKDB), 2015; and United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, (New York: United Nations), February 7, 2014, p. 247.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.; and "Officer at North Korean 'Labor Training Center' Killed by Vengeful Former Inmate," *Radio Free Asia*, May 9, 2019, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/labor-training-center-north-korea-05092019160322.html.

35 Ibid.

36 Interview of former *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 1, Kaech'ŏn, prisoner by HRNK, Seoul, April 23, 2019; and *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2016*, (Seoul: KINU), 2016, p. 107-108.

37 Ibid.

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